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ABSTRACT

Although people may be making progress toward global understanding and multicultural acceptance, there are still "miles to go." Only when an individual can view the members of other cultures as people of equal value will s/he be able to truly understand the perspectives of another. Unfortunately, classroom teachers are rarely equipped to teach a global curriculum. The best and most authentic materials by which to understand another culture are the books and stories written by authors of that culture for the children of that culture. This document presents an annotated bibliography of contemporary international children's literature that has been translated into English. The list contains 4 books from African literature, 8 from Asian literature, 1 from French Canadian literature, 7 from Central and South American literature, 4 from Eastern European literature, and 11 from European literature. (BT)

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Good Neighbors Around the World: Building World Knowledge With Translated Literature for Children

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Rationale for the Use of Translated Literature in the Classroom

Ethnocentrism runs deep in our culture and perhaps in all cultures. However, there is cause for hope. In 1995 the United Nations initiated a global citizenship project by asking children worldwide to send their ideas to world leaders attending the Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark. Several hundred thousand children communicated sophisticated concerns and ideas to world leaders. This is far different than the nationalistically simplistic views found in children being interviewed by Piaget in his study for UNESCO on the causes of war. The children in Piaget's study expressed ethnocentric views hinging on the idea that "we" embody all that is good and right in the world and that "they" are somehow inferior to "us." We may be making progress toward global understanding and multicultural acceptance, however, we have "miles to go." Only when an individual can view the members of other cultures as people of equal value will s/he be able to truly understand the perspectives of another.

Ethnocentrism is truly frightening when viewed from the perspective of world peace and understanding. Very few educators would argue with the premise that reduction of ethnocentrism is an admirable goal. However, to say that teachers must teach a global curriculum that will help provide for peace and international understanding is not particularly valuable unless those who are saying it are at the same time identifying tools with which teachers can carry out these ideals.

Unfortunately, classroom teachers are rarely equipped to teach a global curriculum. Certainly there is very little in teachers' training courses to train them to do so. Perhaps there should be, but that is a discussion for another day. What is needed in the meantime are concrete suggestions for implementation of a manageable classroom program that would help adults and children alike explore and ultimately understand the various perspectives of different cultures. The best and most authentic materials by which to understand another culture are the books and stories written by authors of that culture for the children of the culture. Books are the written symbols of culture and as such are both transmitters of culture and reflections of culture. No serious cultural study can exist without an interest in literature. Good literature goes beyond knowledge into the realms of feeling and being. The text of a story is a bridge that connects the internal world of another to our own internal world and later to a larger external world.

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Choosing Quality Children's Literature

The following annotated list of international children's literature is meant to help teachers and other educational professionals identify quality children's literature from other countries and languages and use that literature in effective classroom programs.

Selected List of Translated Children's Literature

Africa

Daly, Niki (1985). Not so Fast Songololo. First published in South Africa. Atheneum: NY. Most suitable for 4 to 6.
Everyone tries to hurry Malusi, everyone that is, except his Grandmother GoGo. One day Gogo needs Malusi to help her with the shopping. Their day is filled with delights.

Mennen, Ingrid (1994). One Round Moon and a Star For Me. Originally published in English from South Africa. Orchard Books: NY. Most suitable for 3 to 6.
A young boy of rural Lesotho need reassurance that his father is still his papa when a new baby is born into the family.

Sales, Francesc (1989). Ibrahim. Translated from Catalan by Marc Simont, illustrated by Eulalia Sariola. J.B. Lippencott: NY. Most suitable for 8 to 10.
Ibrahim is tempted to exchange his job in the old market for the freer life of a desert nomad until a dream shows him that freedom is something carried in the heart.

Schermbrucker, Reviva (1991). Charlie's House. First published in South Africa, illustrated by Niki Daly. Viking: NY. Most suitable for 4 to 6.
Charlie lives in a shanty with his mother and grandmother. He builds a pretend house of mud, cardboard, popsicle sticks and bottle caps which helps free him for a rich fantasy life.

Asia

He, Liyi and Philip, Neil (Eds.), (1986). The Spring of Butterflies and Other Folktales of China's Minority Peoples. Translated from Chinese and illustrated by Aiqing Pan and Zhao Li. Lothrop: NY. Most suitable for children ages 7 – 12.
Fourteen traditional fantasy stories and folktales from the Tibetan, Thai, Uighur, and Bai minorities living in China.

Ho, Mingfong (1996). Maples in the Mist: Children's Poems from the Tang Dynasty. Translated and Compiled by Minfong Ho, illustrated by Jean and Mou-sien Tseng. Lothrop. Most suitable for children 7 to 12.
A collection of poems, mostly on the beauty of nature, written more than a thousand years ago.

Nakawatari, Harutaka (1992). The Sea and I. Translated from the Japanese by Susan Matsui. Farrar, Straus & Giroux: NY. Most suitable for 6 to 8.
A little boy waits through a storm for his fathers return from the sea. Gorgeous watercolor illustrations.

Sato, Satoru (1989). I Wish I Had a Big Big Tree. Translated from the Japanese by Hitomi Jitodai and Carol Eisman, illustrated by Tsutomu Murakami. William Morrow and Company: NY. Most suitable for 3 to 6 .
Kaoru's imagination is so vivid that he can take a trip up to the very tip top of a tree that exists only in his imagination.

Takaaki, Nomura, (1991). Grandpa's Town. Translated from the Japanese by Amanda Mayers Stinchecum. Kane Miller Book Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 4 to 6.
A young boy, worried that his grandfather is lonely, accompanies him to the public bath.

Tejima (1987). Owl Lake. Translated from the Japanese by an unspecified translator. Philomel Books : NY. Most suitable for 6-8.
As the sun slips down behind the lake and sky darkens, Father Owl comes out to hunt for fish to feed his hungry babies. Graceful text and bold woodcuts make this a unique selection.

Tomioka, Yoshiharu (1992). Fist published in Japan, illustrated by Yoshihau Tsuchida. Scholastic Books: NY. Most suitable for 3 to 6.
The youngest of three sisters in a Japanese family gets ready for a day at preschool.

Wettasinghe, Sybil, (1987). The Umbrella Thief. A Sri Lankan story in which the original language is not specified. Kane Miller Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 5-7.
The illustrations are the stars of this story with many cultural details and in a batik like background.

Canada

Anfousse, Genette (1995). Rosalie's Battles. Translated from the French by Linda Gaboriau, illustrated by Marisol Sarrazin. Dell Yearling: IL. Most suitable for 8 to 10.
Rosalie lives with her 7 aunts in a large old house in Montreal. When a school yard fight turns into "War," Rosalie learns the truth about war from her Vietnamese friend Piam Low.

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Central and South America

Barbot, Daniel, (1991). A Bicycle for Rosaura. Illustrated by Morella Fuenmayor. Kane/Miller Publishers: NY. Most suitable for children 4 to 6.

Senora Amelia loves her pet hen Rosaura and when Rosaura decides she must have a bicycle for her birthday, Senora Amelia is determined to grant the wish.

Bojunga-Nunes, Lygia (1989). The Companions. Translated from the Portuguese by Ellen Watson, illustrated by Larry Watson. Farrar: NY. Most suitable for children 7 to 9.

Stony, a street rabbit, Crystal-Voice, an escaped Circus performer, and Fleur a pampered pet poodle meet and become best friend.

Gutierrez, Douglas (1988). The Night of the Stars. Translated from the Spanish by Carmen Diana Dearden. Kane Miller Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 4 to 7.

"Long, long ago, in a town that was neither near nor far, there lived a man who did not like the night." So begins this Venezuelan story of how the stars came to be.

Kurusa (1985). The Streets are Free. Translated from the Spanish by Karen Englander, illustrated by Monika Doppert. Annick Press. Most suitable for 8 to 11.

Based on the true story of the children of the barrio of San Jose de la Urbina, who wanted a place to play. Realistic illustrations alternating color and black and white.

Pico, Fernando (1991). The Red Comb. Translated from the Spanish by Argentina Palacious illustrated by Maria Antonia Ordoxez. Bridgewater Books. Most suitable for 6 and above.

Bright colored Puerto Rican folk art illustrates this important story of Vitita and her elderly neighbor, Sina Rosa who plot to save a runaway slave from Pedro Calderon the slave catcher.

Rondon, Javier (1994). The Absent-Minded Toad. Translated from the Spanish by Kathryn Corbett, illustrated by Marcela Cabrera. Kane/Miller Publishing: NY. Most suitable for children 3 to 6.

A story in verse which follows a toad to market. He is so overwhelmed by the color and activity of the market, that he forgets to bring anything home.

Volkmer, Jane Anne, (1990). Song of the Chirimia: A Guatemalan Folktale. Translated from the Spanish by Lori Ann Schatschneider. Carolrhoda Books. Most suitable for 8 to 12.

The Mayan king Clear Sky will do anything for his beloved daughter Moonlight. When Moonlight needs to marry, Clear Sky invites all the eligible young men to the central plaza.

Eastern Europe

Dalokay, Vedat (1994). Sister Shako and Kolo the Goat. Translated from Turkish by Guner Ener. Lothrop: NY. Most suitable for children 7 to 9.

Village life in eastern Turkey during the 1940s.

Kharms, Daniil (1996). First, Second (1996). Translated from the Russian by Richard Pevear, illustrated by Marc Rosenthal. Farrar, Straus & Giroux: NY. Most suitable for 6 to 8.

For the four companions of First, Second, a short journey proves hilariously complicated.

Romanova, Natalia (1985). Once There was a Tree. Translated from the Russian by Anne Schwartz, illustrated by Gennady Spirin. Dial Books: NY. Most suitable for 6 and over.

A beautifully illustrated ecology take on the song of the earth.

Skutina, Vladimir (1991). Nobody Has Time for Me. Translated from the Czech by Dagmar Herrmann, illustrated by Marie-Jose Sacre. Wellington Publishing, Inc.: IL. Most suitable for 7 to 9.

Karin's meeting with father time teaches her that people can find time for each other if they work at it.

Europe

Calders, Pere (1986). Brush. Translated from the Spanish by Marguerite Feitlowitz, illustrated by Carme Sole Vendrell. Kane Miller Book Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 4 to 6.

When Sala adopts a large brush to replace his banished dog Turco, the brush surprises him by coming to life and actually behaving like a dog.

Cohen, Peter (1992). Mr. Bohm and the Herring. Translated from the Swedish by Richard E. Fisher, illustrated by Olof Landstrom. R & S Books: Stockholm. Most suitable for 5 to 8.

Mr. Bohm likes to consider all kinds of problems like; why is it that people wear clothes but other creatures go around stark naked? One of the few picture books which addresses metacognition.

De Vries, Anke (1995). My Elephant Can do Anything. Translated from the Dutch, illustrated by Ilju Walraven. Front Street Press: NC. Most suitable for 3 to 6. The owner of a remarkable elephant proudly describes his pet's feats, including balancing on a coffeepot, hanging from the ceiling and walking on a tightrope.

Escudie, Rene (1988). Paul and Sebastian. Translated from the French by Roderick Townly, illustrated by Ulises Wensell. Kane/Miller Book Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 6 to 8.

Paul and Sebastian live in different circumstances and their parents don't want them to play together. In time, as is the way children, they become best friends and in the process teach the adults something about "difference."

Gantschev, Ivan (1995). Moon Lake Translated from the German by Marianne Martens. North-South Books: NY. Most suitable for 7-9.

Peter's grandfather passes away before he can show the secret location of Moon Lake. When Peter finds himself he learns the value of being content with what you have. Beautifully illustrated.

Hanel, Wolfram (1996). The Other Side of the Bridge. Translated from the German by J. Alison James illustrated by Alex de Wolf. North-South Books: NY. Most suitable for 5 to 8.

Andy doesn't like playing sports like the other boys. He prefers to study nature, and he knows the names of all the trees and flowers, the birds and other animals in the woods near his home.

Kaldhol, Marit, (1987). Goodbye Rune. Translated from the Norwegian by Michael Crosby-Jones, illustrated by Wenche Oyen. Kane Miller Book Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 6 and up.

Rune and Sara are the best of friends. They go to school together, play together, and imagine the future together – until the day that Rune accidently drowns. A sensitive treatment of a child's first experience with death.

Karvoskaia, Natacha (1995). Dounia. Originally published in Belgium. Kane Miller Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 3 to 6.

A wonderful story of an African child who is adopted by a couple in Belgium. Dounia would like to do lots of things in her new home, hold the cat, give Caroline a kiss...but she doesn't dare. Tommorow she is sure that she will dare.

Lindstrom, Eva (1989). The Cat Hat. Translated from the Swedish by Stephen Croall. Kane Miller Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 5-7.

Upset by the disappearance of her cat Bruno, a woman is horrified when she sees her neighbor with a new fur hat the same color as Bruno.

Mandelbaum, Pili (1990). You be Me/ I'll be You. Translated from the French. Kane Miller Publishers: NY. Most suitable for 4 –6.

A dark skinned girl and her white father experiment to see what it would be like to have the other's skin color.

Siekkinen, Raija (1987). Mister King. Translated from the Finish by Tim Steffa, illustrted by Hannu Taina. Carolrhoda Books, Inc. Most suitable for 6 to 8.

Beautiful and detailed water colors support the story of a lonely king who searches his seaside kingdom for subjects.